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WASHINGTON, DC - U.S. Rep. Charlie Melancon commented on the preliminary report released by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers today recommending that the Mississippi River-Gulf Outlet be permanently closed to both deep-draft and shallow-draft navigation. The report further recommended that closure of MRGO be included in the Corps' final Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration (LACPR) plan, due in December of 2007. The full report can be accessed [here](#).

"I'm pleased the Corps is now on the same page as the people of southeast Louisiana in saying MRGO must go," said Melancon. **"MRGO has been a financial and environmental disaster for Louisiana since the day it opened, and it is past time we took action to close it."** □

"I am encouraged by the fact that today's Corps' report closely mirrors the recommendations in the preliminary draft of the state's Comprehensive Coastal Protection Master Plan.□ This indicates there is a consensus about what must be done to close MRGO and move forward with actually getting the job done."

"I am also encouraged that the Corps' report includes specific recommendations for restoring the coastal wetlands and recreating the wildlife habitat degraded by MRGO.□ Advocates including the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana, Environmental Defense, and America's WETLAND have worked for years to bring attention to Louisiana's disappearing coastline and the role man-made projects have played in accelerating the erosion.□ Today it is clear the Corps has heard their arguments and is responding." □

"Most of all, I am pleased that the people of St. Bernard Parish, who have been fighting to close MRGO for years, are one step closer to seeing permanent closure become a reality.□ The fact that the Corps' report recommends building an 'armored earthen structure' in the channel shows a commitment to permanently closing MRGO and restoring the marshland it has destroyed.□ As we have learned all too painfully over the past year and a half, there is a direct link between the loss of coastal marshes and the devastation hurricanes cause to inland communities.□ It is my hope, and the hope of all

the people of south Louisiana, that by rebuilding our coastal wetlands and barrier islands, we will improve our first line of defense against future storms."

The Corps' report also outlined opportunities for incorporating closure of MRGO with overall hurricane storm protection and ecosystem restoration efforts in the final LACPR plan. These suggestions include:

- Freshwater diversion into the MRGO and surrounding marshes (possibly in the vicinity of Violet Canal);
- Shoreline protection to prevent wetlands erosion (including maintenance of existing projects);
- Habitat creation through the placement of sediment for rebuilding marshes, barrier islands, and ridges;
- Increasing existing levee heights to new hurricane protection levels; and/or
- New hurricane protection levee alignments or surge protection structures.

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